

# NJCFS NEWSLETTER

Office of Management and Budget  
Accounting Bureau

August 2000

Issue #31

## **MILEAGE REIMBURSEMENT RATE INCREASE**

The Fiscal Year 2001 Appropriations Act increases the mileage reimbursement rate for employees' use of personal automobiles for State business travel. The increase is from \$0.25 to \$0.31 per mile and is effective July 1, 2000. Circular Letter 01-02-OMB, Automobile Mileage Reimbursement Rate, was issued to announce the new rate for reimbursement purposes. All requests for mileage reimbursement for travel on or after July 1 should be calculated using the new rate.

This change does not affect rates established by negotiated labor contracts, such as those for park rangers.

## **TRAVEL SERVICES CHANGES**

Due to the July 31, 2000 expiration of the contract with American Express Travel to serve as the State Travel Services Contractor, the State's Travel Office in the Division of Purchase and Property, Department of the Treasury will temporarily carry out that function. All requests for airline tickets will be handled by that office until a new contract has been awarded. **Agencies should not contact American Express after July 31.** During this interim period between contracts, agencies should be aware of the following:

- Hours are Monday through Friday – 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Note: There will be no toll free emergency after hours telephone service in this interim period.
- Travel Office Contact: Garry Dales – telephone number: 1-609-984-3131; Fax number: 1-609-777-2968.

- If travel arrangers are unable to contact someone at the Travel Office after the third attempt, they will be able to leave basic information such as the traveler's name, departure dates and times, airport preferences, travel arranger's name and telephone number, with the Bureau of Central Services at 1-609-777-1880. This information will be forwarded to the Travel Office who will contact the travel arranger to make the reservations.
- Rail tickets for Amtrak travel in the Northeast Corridor (Boston MA to Washington, DC and points between) must be arranged by the individual traveler.
- As in the past, NJ Transit tickets must be purchased by the individual traveler.
- Air tickets will be electronic where applicable.
- Requests for reservations will be accepted no earlier than 60 days in advance of departure date during this interim period.
- Agencies should continue to use the Travel Services Indicator flag on Travel Authorization (TE/TH) transactions to alert the State Travel Office that tickets are needed.
- The American Express corporate travel card program will continue to be in effect.
- Employees who have been issued the American Express corporate travel card may use the card to purchase airline tickets only with the express written authorization of the State's Travel Office. In those cases, employees should obtain tickets directly from a carrier.

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Agencies will be notified when a new contract has been established.

## **NJCFS FALL TRAINING**

Training on the various NJCFS modules will resume in September. The OMB Accounting Bureau will schedule and conduct classes based on agency requests. The following classes will be offered: Overview, Inquiry, Budgeting, Expenditure, Revenue, Travel, Grants and Projects. These are the standard NJCFS training classes and are intended only for new employees or those employees whose changing job responsibilities may require training in an area for which they have not previously been trained.

Departmental training requests should be submitted to OMB through their respective Agency Training Coordinators. Dates and times will be arranged with the Training Coordinators. Requests may be faxed to Michael Gallagher at 609-984-5210.

## **TEXT REQUIRED**

Text must be created for all Travel Authorization (TE and TH) and Agency Order (AO) transactions as well as for Travel Voucher (TV) Advance payments. While full authority for approving and processing these transactions has been delegated to the agencies, they must continue to enter text to provide documentation for agency approval officers as well as for auditors and OMB monitors. Text is also required for all Transfer of Appropriation (TA) transactions. Note that TA's continue to require final approval by OMB. Text is most easily created at the time the transaction is being entered; however, it can also be created or modified

by accessing the appropriate text table at any time after the transaction has been processed.

**Transfer of Appropriation** transactions require review and final approval by OMB. In certain defined circumstances they also require the approval of the Office of Legislative Services (OLS). Text for these transactions is entered in the TATX Table and should provide as much detail and justification as necessary to allow OMB and OLS to make a proper evaluation of the requested transfer.

Text related to all **Travel Authorization** transactions (TE's and TH's) is to be entered on the TETX Table. It is especially important that details related to modifications of the original records also be recorded to avoid follow-up inquiries. For example, when a travel advance has been paid to an employee based on hotel, meals and miscellaneous authorized amounts, a subsequent decrease in any of these fields will make the advance amount appear excessive when monitoring reports are run. A full explanation of the changes on the text table will provide the necessary explanation. Likewise, all changes in travel itineraries should always be documented on TETX for insurance purposes.

**Agency Orders** should be created with accompanying text entered on the POTX Table. Details of the contract, along with any unique requirements, should be documented in the text.

Text required for **Travel Vouchers** issued for employee travel advances must be entered on the TVTX Table. Information entered on this table should include details of how the travel advance was calculated.

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Other types of Travel Voucher transactions may also record text on the TVTX.

## **TRAVEL SERVICES INDICATOR**

A new system edit produces a warning message when an amount is entered in the "Air/Rail" field on Travel Authorization transactions (TE/TH) if the Travel Services Action Flag field is left blank. This is to ensure that air or rail travel is obtained through the Travel Services contractor. The system will post an entry to the Travel Service Action Table identifying the need for tickets whenever a "Y" is entered in the Travel Services Action Flag field.

When tickets are booked directly by employees (e.g., NJ Transit) there is no need for action by Travel Services. In these cases, agencies should simply enter the amount of the rail tickets in the Air/Rail field of the TE/TH and leave the Travel Services Indicator Flag blank. This will generate the new warning message, but the message can be disregarded and approvals and processing can proceed. Providing an explanation for this entry on the TETX text screen will avoid subsequent follow-up inquiries.

## **STATE USE AND DISTRIBUTION CENTER PAYMENTS**

Accounting Bureau monitoring reports have revealed that a number of checks are being issued by State agencies to the Bureau of State Use Industries (DEPTCOR) and to the State Distribution Center. Payments to these entities by State agencies should never result in a check being issued. Instead, they are processed through intra-governmental transactions that debit and credit the State agency accounts indicated.

State Use payments should be processed in the MACS-E system, using an "STU" intra-governmental order type. All purchases from the State Distribution Center should be recorded through the use of an NJCFS intra-governmental Agency Order (AO), with subsequent payment made in the form of an intra-governmental payment voucher (AV.) In cases where funds are not required to be encumbered, an intra-governmental payment transaction (UA) should be processed.

Issuing checks to pay charges to these organizations results in costly and unnecessary paper processing, opportunity for lost or stolen checks and the additional burden of reconciling and reporting on checks issued.

## **PRIOR YEAR AND CLAIM CITATIONS**

The Fiscal Year 2001 Appropriations Act contains provisions authorizing the Director of OMB to process payments to liquidate prior year liabilities and to pay claims. The citations entered on these transactions when submitted to OMB for approval should include the following information:

**Prior Year Liabilities** - P.L. 2000, Chapter 53, Section 38

**Claims** – P.L. 2000, Chapter 53, Section 46

The accounting transactions used to make these payments should not be fully approved by the agency. Documentation packages for these transactions should be submitted to Michael Henry, OMB - Accounting Bureau, 33 West State Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, PO Box 221, Trenton, NJ 08625. Questions related to

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these payments should be directed to Michael at 1-609-292-0051.

## **CLARIFICATION**

This is to clarify the article "Direct Purchase Authority Threshold Increase" that appeared in Issue #30 of the Newsletter. The intention of the article was to notify agencies that, because the Delegated Purchase Authority (DPA) threshold was increased to \$25,000 for MACS-E, Non-Purchase Bureau Encumbrances and Expenditures in NJCFS, as defined in Circular Letter 95-16-OMB, were also increased to the same amount.

DPA orders must still be processed through MACS-E and are subject to the regulations set forth in Circular Letter 00-13-DPP. Non-Purchase Bureau Encumbrances and Expenditures are defined in C.L. 95-16-OMB and are processed directly in NJCFS. A revised circular letter will be issued in the near future to replace C.L. 95-16-OMB

## **Q&A**

**Q.** When creating text for Transfer of Appropriation (TA) transactions, I sometimes require more space than the eleven lines that the TATX Table provides. How can I get additional space for lengthy texts?

**A.** To create additional screens of text on any text table, follow these steps:

1. Enter "A" in the Action field of the TATX table and enter the first 11 lines of text (other text tables have 10 lines.) The system will number the Text Line field on the right of

the screen with odd numbers 001 through 021.

2. Press Enter. The message "All Lines Added" should be displayed.
3. Again enter an "A" in the Action field, key in the next line of information, tab to the Text line field of the first line and change the number to "023." Press Enter. The message "Add Key Found" should be displayed.
4. Scan the table for the first portion of the text. Refill the screen with the additional line by pressing Enter. This will display the second screen with Text Line 023.
5. Enter "A" in the Action field and proceed to enter up to ten additional lines on this screen. Press Enter. The message "Add Key Found" will be displayed, indicating that the additional text has been added to the table.

**Q.** What is the correct procedure to calculate and process travel advances for employees traveling on State business?

**A.** Employee travel advances should only be issued in exceptional situations and never to an employee who has been issued a State Travel Charge Card. When it is determined that an advance is justified and necessary, the advance should be calculated and processed as follows.

The calculation of a travel advance is based on the total of the amounts entered on the Travel Authorization transaction (TE/TH) for hotel, meals and miscellaneous expenses. Where the total of these expenses is less than \$250,

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no advance is permitted. For amounts between \$250 and \$500, an advance of 75% of the total may be made. For amounts totaling over \$500, a 90% advance may be issued. Once the calculation has been made, a Travel Voucher (TV) Type "A" must be processed referencing the TE or TH. This will result in the issuance of an advance check to the employee.

Employees should be reminded that a full accounting for all travel expenses is necessary to relieve the advance issued to them. Until a full settlement is made that satisfies their outstanding advance balances, employees remain responsible for their repayment. Fiscal offices are responsible to ensure that travel settlement documents are submitted and processed in a timely and accurate manner. Where refunds for unused advances are due, agencies should pursue these repayments from employees, making certain that they are entered on Travel Refund (TC) transactions. These documents must reference the original TE/TH transactions to relieve the outstanding advance balances.